

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE: EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2012-2013 - Doctor of Health Studies (DHS) - (module assignments in Community, Sustainable Health & Well-being; Health, Medicine & Society; Research Design)

Dear Dr Harden,

I am writing further to your External Examiner's report for the above programme(s). Your Report has been considered by the Cardiff School of Social Sciences in accordance with our approved procedures. I am, therefore, now in a position to respond on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor to the main points you had raised.

Issues Highlighted

Your Report raised issue(s) which have been referred for consideration by the School. The following response has been provided on behalf of the School.

"1. The External Examiner's bullet-pointed "areas of weakness" on "Lack of critical engagement in relation to concepts", "Limited theoretical engagement" and related comment, "Quality of writing ... for a number of students" and " ... limited knowledge of statistical analysis":

Dr Harden has examined one module: SIR022 Research Design. Of the seven assignments that were reviewed by Dr Harden, five were submitted by Year 1 module-stage Professional Doctorate students for whom this was the second module with which they had engaged. This may go some way towards explaining the areas of weakness identified by Dr Harden since a marked improvement in students' capacity for theoretical and critical engagement, as well as the quality of their writing, as they progress throughout the module-stage of the programme is a typifying characteristic of the Professional Doctorate. Given this, it is heartening to note that Dr Harden's observations were contextualised by her overall perception that 'Overall the academic standards were appropriate for the degree and stage within the degree and there were some very good pieces of work.' Nonetheless, Dr Harden's comments will be considered by the module team.

2. The indication that the External Examiner "was not entirely clear how the [Generic marking criteria for the Professional Doctorate] were applied for these specific assessments or how the % allocation of the different criteria was applied in arriving at the marks awarded":

The document to which Dr Harden refers [Generic marking criteria for the Professional Doctorate] is in fact a rubric, or framework, of expectations regarding assessed work that is used to inform and guide markers in their assessment of submissions across modules and in a range of formats. For this reason, direct application of the framework components in terms of structuring marker feedback would not be expected. It is acknowledged therefore that the current title of this document ('Marking Criteria ...') is somewhat misleading and consideration will be given to re-naming the marking framework to more clearly convey its intended use by the next Doctoral Board of Studies.

3. In the context of positive comments on feedback provided to students, the suggestion that it may "be useful to link feedback directly to marking criteria", and related comments:

The response to 2. above addresses this issue in part by explaining that the descriptors contained within the marking framework are not expected to be used as 'criteria'. However, Dr Harden's observation regarding the direct replication of words

and phrases from the marking framework by markers in their feedback is helpful and will be highlighted to module markers.”

Positive Comments

The School and University are pleased to note your positive comments on the School's provision including:

- a. **[1, 2 and 3] your positive indications regarding the programme structure, academic standards and assessment process**
- b. **[6] your positive comments relating to quality of feedback given to students, communications with the administrative team and arrangements for the Examining Board.**

I hope that you will find this response satisfactory and thank you for your service as External Examiner.

In order to meet the expectations of the QAA Quality Code, both the External Examiner Annual Report and this Institutional Response will be published on Registry web pages and will be available publically.

The University's provision of the formal Institutional Response is not intended to constrain direct communication between schools and their External Examiners. Schools are encouraged to discuss with their External Examiners any matters of detail raised in their Reports and, more widely, any issues impacting on the quality and standards of awards, including possible changes to programmes.

We are most grateful for your comments and for your support in this matter.

Mrs Jill Bedford
Director of Registry and Academic Services